THE CRY OF OPPRESSION and CRUELTY

Inflicted upon divers Innocent People called Quakers, *in the County of* Glocester, *for peaceable meeting together to worship God; being a Copy of a Paper directed to the Judges of the late Assizes at* Glocester; *presented to the tender Consideration of such, who are in Power to relieve the oppressed.*

BEfore you we lay our Grievances in as brief a manner as may be, desiring you may weigh and consider thereof, and relieve the oppressed, who are a People fearing God, and do shew forth the Fruits of his Heavenly Gift, in walking honestly and justly in the sight of all our Neighbours and Country-men.

This is an Account of the sad and deep Sufferings of the People called QUAKERS in and about *Winterburn* and *Olverstone*, and about *Kings-Westone*, and about *Westerly*, and *Little Badmanton*, in the County of *Glocester*, in the years, 1676, and 1677. by *Francis Fane*, and *Gabriel Low*, and *John Meridith*, called Justices of the Peace.

In and about those Places aforesaid, from about Fifty Eight Persons Inhabitants thereabout, there hath been taken away and lost of their Goods, on Account of the late Act against Conventicles, by Warrants from the Justices aforesaid, the Goods and Losses already suffered amounting to about 717 l. 11 s. the Particulars being ready to be shewed to them that desire it: And besides the Account above, there are more Fines imposed, and Warrants granted thereupon, to the value of One Thousand Pounds and upwards.

Also a further account of the most cruel and barbarous Actions and Proceedings of *J. Meridith* called Justice, against an Innocent, Harmless People, for no other cause, but for their meeting and worshipping the Lord God of Heaven and Earth; and in the pure Worship in the Spirit of Truth, endeavouring to keep their Consciences void of Offence both to God and man.—He caused 27 Persons to be indicted at the

Seſſions at *Gloceſter*, in the year 1677. for not coming to their Church ſo called, though many of them had been Sufferers by the Act againſt Conventicles; and they were threatned with Impriſonment.

The ſaid Juſtice *Meridith* at a Meeting ſent *Henry Poyntin* and *Nathaniel Heskins* to priſon, for not finding Sureties for their good Behaviour, though no misbehaviour was proved againſt them: and they were kept above a quarter of a year priſoners, on no other Account, without any Trial: and then he cauſed an Indictment to be read againſt them, above a quarter of a year after they had been impriſoned as aforeſaid: and that Indictment being read at the Seſſions againſt them, for not coming to their Church ſo called, for eight weeks, they were fined Forty Pounds a piece, and kept Priſoners as they had been above three Moneths, and had no Trial, and are Priſoners to this day.

The ſaid Juſtice *Meridith* at a Meeting at *Frenchhaw*, in the County of *Gloceſter*, upon the 13th day of the 4th moneth (commonly called *June*) fell upon *William Bennet*, and beat him very ſorely; and he did beat *William Wade* alſo. The twentieth of the ſame Moneth, at the ſame place, in the High-way, near the Meeting-houſe, he found *John Silcock* and he took him by the hair of the Head, and pluckt him into the Meeting-houſe Yard, and then drew his naked Knife, and ſaid, *He would mark him*; but his own Clerk and others ſtepped in and prevented him: otherwiſe it was verily thought, he would have done the ſaid *Silcock* ſome great miſchief.——The twenty third of the ſame moneth, coming to the ſame place he demanded of *George Peace* what his Name was, and he not giving his Name ſuddenly, *John Meridith* drew his naked Knife upon him, but one of his own Servants reſtrained him from his wicked purpoſe.——The twenty ſeventh of the ſame moneth at the ſame place, the ſaid *John Meridith* took *John Bawn* and pulled him by the hair of the head, and after that finding him in the High-way the ſame day, he fell upon him and beat him after a very cruel and barbarous manner.

And the ſaid *Meridith* did beat *John Fryer*, and *Joſeph Glover* two Officers, becauſe they refuſed to pull and hale people as he would have them. *Samuel Symons* making his Appeal to *John Meridith* for a Fine taken from him, the ſaid *Meridith* fell upon him and beat him exceedingly in his own houſe.

Several others were beaten and abuſed by the ſaid *Meridith*, which would be tedious to mention particuly. Many Friends were Eye-witneſſes to theſe Paſſages. And the ſaid Juſtice *Meridith* broke five Glaſs

Windows

Windows to pieces with his Staff, not leaving ſo much as one whole Quarrel, and alſo cauſed the Benches and Formes to be cut to pieces.

Since the Account aforeſaid there hath been taken from *John Boy* of *Luckinton*, for three ſeveral Fines amounting to 11 l. goods worth about the ſame value, by Warrant from Juſtice *Gabriel Low*.

And the Officers when they ſeized upon our poor Friends Goods, belonging to *Badmanton* Meeting, did ſay, they were charged by *Gabriel Low* Juſtice, to take all they could find, and that which was not worth carrying away, they ſhould burn it, or break it to pieces, inſomuch that *Thomas Holbrow* an old blind man, and his wife, and ſeveral other poor Friends, had not a Bed left them, but their Lodging hath been on Straw for ſeveral weeks; and its above eleven Moneths ſince the blind man's Bed was taken, and his Lodging is on Straw to this day. And ſome Friends lent ſome of the Sufferers a Bed and Coverlets, and ſome other things to keep them warm in the winter, and the ſaid Officers took away part thereof, and broke the Bedſtead, and cut the Cord. Alſo the aforeſaid blind man and *Henry Aſhby* of *Hawksbury-Upton* were taken up by Seſſions Proceſs, and carried to Goal, being indicted by that Act for not going to their Worſhip.

Some of the *Marqueſs of Worceſter* his Servants, *Thomas Cook* his Butcher, *Robert Long* his Brewer, *John Newman* his Keeper, Theſe became Informers, and went to *Little Badmanton* often to the *Quake s* Peaceable Meetings being at the Blind man's houſe & there in a moſt cruel barbarous manner abuſed the Innocent People of that Meeting, of which Abuſes there are ſome few Inſtances, for the ſake of them that have ſome Tenderneſs in them, and are againſt theſe wicked Practices.

Thomas Cook the Butcher one of the Informers aforeſaid, at the ſaid Meeting ſaid, *It was no more ſin to kill one of them, then to kill a Dog*: He did much abuſe *Sarah Aſhby*, by punching, beating, and uſing her in a ſhameful manner, And ſo did *John Newman* another of the aforeſaid Informers throw the ſaid *Sarah* to the Ground in a ſhameful, wicked manner; and by the wrong ſhe received, ſhe ſuffered damage to her Body, and ſome time after fell ill. The ſaid Informers came to the Meeting when there were but three Perſons beſides the Family, whom they took and threw againſt the walls, and againſt the Poſts of the Door in a cruel barbarous manner; and *Thomas Holbrow* the blind man of the houſe told them, their Actions were quite contrary to the Act; the ſaid Informers replied, *What do you tell us of the Act? We matter not the Act.* The ſaid Informers abuſed *John Jones* in a deſperate ſhameful manner, throwing him over the Gate ſeveral times

to the hazard of his Life, throwing him upon his Back, and then laid him thwart a Stick, and in a grievous manner abuſed him.

And at another time, when the ſaid Informers were abuſing Friends, they ſaid, *If we kill one of you, we believe we ſhall not be hanged for it.*

And the ſaid Informers took *Benjamin Power*, and threw him over a wall, and did beat him in a ſhameful manner; and at another time in a Meadow, the ſaid Informers took him, and threw him upon his Back, and in a moſt wicked manner abuſed him. And the ſaid Informers took *John Boy* and threw him over a Gate and Stile ſeveral times, and dragged him in the Street on his Back, in the Dirt, and drove him in a Wheel-Barrow, and threw water on him, alſo they took him a Height from the Ground, and let him fall on his Back; This they have done ſeveral times. Alſo the ſaid Informers took *John Tayler* in the Street, and ſtruck him Several deſperate Blows, and threw him over a Wall in ſuch a dangerous manner that it might have undone him. *Thomas Cock* Informer took *Nehemiah Stinchcomb* and led him away from the Meeting, out of ſight, and did beat him till his fleſh was black; and had not one looked over a Wall accidentally, they knew not but he might have been ſpoiled: And he lay very ill under the Bruiſes ſeveral dayes.

The ſaid Informers took *John Beard* as he was going into a Friends houſe, by the hair of the head, and beat his head againſt a Poſt in an Unchriſtian-like manner; and they ſwore very deſperate Oaths, *That they would cut off his Ears*; and they followed him half a Mile Beating, Kicking, Punching, and Nipping him by the Ears, in a very wicked barbarous manner; another time they put a Rope about his Neck, and ſo led him up the Street. The ſaid Informers took *John Peace*, a man about ſixty four years old, and dragged him out of the Meeting into the Street, and threw him upon his Back, and then took him up by his Girdle above the Ground, and let him fall again, in a deſperate manner: Moreover they ſaid, they would throw him into a Well (which was near) but one coming by prevented them; and being much bruiſed he complained of it a great while.

It would be tedious to inſtance all the Wrongs and Injuries which theſe Innocent People have ſuſtained from theſe wicked malicious Informers.

And alſo ſome ſuffer by the *Act* of 12 d. a day for not coming to the Pariſh-Church ſo called: So the Judges, and others in Authority to do Juſtice, may ſee how many Laws are laid upon us, to deſtroy us,

contrary

contrary to the King's Words and Speeches (viz.) *That none should call us in Question if we live Peaceable:* And none can justly say, that ever we did forfeit our Liberty: And we do believe it is not the King's mind, that we should be ruinated and destroyed, who are his Peaceable Subjects, and desire his Good, and all that are under HIM.

A further Account of the Sufferings of the People called Quakers *in the* Forrest of Dean, *in the County of* Glocester, *upon the late Act against Conventicles; By these and such like proceedings the Cruelty of the Mercileſs is made manifeſt.*

John Gwyn of *Colford* in the County aforeſaid, for being at Meetings to worſhip God, in the aforeſaid Town, was fined Twenty five Shillings, for three ſeveral Meetings (viz.) the firſt Meeting being on the ſeventh day of the eighth moneth, 77. The ſecond upon the twenty firſt of the eighth moneth, 77. The third Meeting being upon the eighth day of the tenth moneth, 77. for which he had a Mare, Saddle, Bridle, Hatchet, Nippers, Looking-glaſs, and two Eggs, and his Wife's nurſing-basket and Comb (having a Wife and five ſmall Children) with other Goods taken from him upon the twenty firſt day of the tenth moneth, 77. to the value of 3 l. by *John Benfield* Conſtable of the ſaid Town, by virtue of a warrant from *Baynham Throckmorton* Knight, upon Information to the ſaid Juſtice by *Charles Williams* Bailiff of the Hundred, and *William Vick* being Informers.

William Hibbs of *Aylburton*, in the County aforeſaid, for being at the ſame Meeting to worſhip God, was fined in the ſum of twenty ſhillings; and by warrant from the aforeſaid Juſtice, directed to *Richard Brown* Conſtable, who came with other Officers the laſt day of the tenth moneth, 77. to take diſtreſs; and the ſaid *William* not being at home, *John Mills* Overſeer of the poor, violently broke open his Son *Jonathan Hibs* his ſhop door, and took as much Cloth of Linnen, and Wollen, that was worth twelve Ponnds and upwards, for the fine of twenty ſhillings impoſed upon his Father.

Jenkin Hopkin of *Colford* for being at the ſame Meetings, was fined for himſelf and others, in the ſum of 14 l. of the which fine 10 l. was for the Speaker; the aforeſaid *John Benfield* Conſtable, with ſeveral other Officers, came to take Diſtreſs the twenty fourth day of the tenth moneth, 77. and did take away out of his ſhop, Cloth and other Goods; and the twenty ſixth day following, they being not ſatisfied

for

for the fine, came again and riffled his shop and his house, and carried away what they pleased, not leaving Bed-clothes to cover himself, his Wife & Children; This was done in the presence of many of his Neighbours; who seeing their Cruelty, did lament and weep, and said, *They feared God's Judgments would come upon them, because of such Doings:* The value of which Goods cannot at present be justly given account of as hereafter may.

Henry Lloyd of *Alvington* in the County aforesaid, being fined in the sum of twenty pounds, for the Meeting-house, and by Warrant from the aforesaid Justice, directed to *John Knight* Constable of the aforesaid Town, who with other Officers came and seized upon his Corn in his Barn, to the value of Thirty pounds.

William Howel of *Colford*, for being at the same Meetings before mentioned, was fined in twenty five shillings, for which he had Iron and other Goods taken from him the twenty sixth day of the eleventh moneth, 77. by *John Benfield* Constable of the aforesaid Town, and other Officers, worth three pounds, which Goods, fifty shillings worth of it not being his own, the Owner had it again.

John Raynolds of *Berybill*, for being at one of the said Meetings before named, was fined in five shillings for himself, and ten pounds for the Speaker, for which he had taken from him on the twenty sixth day of the tenth moneth, 77. by the aforesaid Constable and other Officers, by Warrant from the aforesaid Justice, One Cow, One brewing-Kettle, One big Iron Pot, One Brass Pot, One big Brass Candlestick, One Pewter Candlestick, Three Dishes of Pewter, One Pewter Salt-sellar, One Gridiron, Two Dripping-pans, One Bolster, One Pillow, One Coverlet, and a Table-cloth: The just worth of these Goods we know not.

This Account was taken the 22d *day of the* 11th *moneth*, 77. *by us whose Names are hereunto subscribed.*

Henry Lloyd	*John Hibbs.*
Jenkin Hopkin.	*William Howel,*
William Hibbs.	*John Gwyn.*

A Postscript.

WE are perswaded, yea, clearly and fully satisfied by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, That NONE (*Especially such*) who do professs his Holy Name and Doctrine, *Ought to persecute about, or concerning Religion, Faith and Worship of the living God*; Persecution being wholely inconsistant with the Tender *Spirit*, Holy Doctrine, Meek and Innocent Conversation of the Heavenly Man Christ Jesus our souls Captain, High-Priest and Bishop, who came not to destroy mens Lives, but to save them, who is our Prince of Peace, who leads us into Peace with God, and one with another, and to have Unfeigned Love unto our Enemies; in which *Love* we pray for those who have and do persecute and Dispitefully use us, in which we desire their Unfeigned Repentance, and Salvation.

The Law which came by *Moses*, which punished those who rebelled against God (in running into false worship & Idolatry) with outward & bodily Punishment to death, was ended by our Lord Jesus Christ, who offered up himself through the eternal Spirit, 1600 years ago, as a Lamb without *Spot* and Blemish, who rebuked his own Disciples, who in their infancy would have fire come down from heaven to destroy those who would not receive him: We believe and are assured by him, that it is the Duty of his Disciples and Ministers to labour in the Spirit of Truth, in Unfeigned Love, Meekness and Patience, to convince and convert Idolators and all *Gainsayers* (who are under Mistakes about Religion, Faith in God and Christ, and Worship, &c.) by Sound Doctrine, Good Life and Conversation; for so Christ Jesus and his *Holy* Apostles and Ministers did; whose Holy Doctrine and Example we are exhorted, by him and them, to follow: By these Spiritual Weapons they destroyed Idolatry out of the hearts of *Multitudes* and converted them to God; but those who have pretended to set up and uphold Christian Religion, by outward Violence, in oppressing People, and destroying them in their Persons and Estates, by these their Carnal and Unchristian VVeapons, they never made one True Christian, nor ever can; but such do bring a great Scandal upon the Name of Christianity among the *Turks*, *Jews* and *Heathens*.

Christ and his Apostles were persecuted for their pure, peaceble Religion, but they never persecuted any. VVe desire the Rulers and Magistrates of *England* seriously to consider of these things, and of the

the many Grievous Burdens which have been laid and long continued upon us in our Persons and Estates, *Only* for our Faith in, and Obedience to God and Christ: And we desire you in the Fear and Love of God, to exercise your Power to remove Oppression from off the Peaceable People of God in this Land, that the God that made you may take pleasure in you, and give you the Reward of Peace and Rest in your latter End; for he will certainly reward every one, *According to their deeds done in the Body, whether they be good or evil.*

Friends, Remember and obey the Command of Christ Jesus, who said, *Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them*: And he said, *If ye keep my Commandments, ye shall abide in my Love, as I have kept my Fathers Commandments, and abide in his Love.*

Persecution about the exercise of Faith and Worship unto God and Christ, hath made many Hypocrites; but it never made one True Christian, nor ever will: Therefore let all Magistrates, Teachers & People who are concerned therein, speedily cease from this Unchristian practice, & repent of what is already done, that it may be well with them in the world to come.

Given forth by a Member of the Church of Christ

William Gibson.

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THE END.